

MINUTES
HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION (HCDC)
Meeting – March 14, 2012
Fresno City Hall, Room 2165-A (2nd Floor)
2600 Fresno Street
Fresno, California 93721

A. CALL TO ORDER

With a quorum being present, the meeting was called to order by Chair Cox at 5:09 p.m.

Commissioners

Present: Rogenia Cox, CHAIRPERSON
Judge Armando Rodriguez, VICE-CHAIR
Bob Farrar, Commissioner
Barbara Fiske, Commissioner
Stephanie Roberts, Commissioner

Absent: Daniel Payne, Commissioner
Drew Wilson, Commissioner

Staff

Present: Erica Castaneda, Project Manager
Housing and Community Development
Bonnie Christian, Recording Secretary
Housing and Community Development

Absent: Craig Scharton, Assistant Director
Development and Resource Management
Department

B. COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Erica Castaneda, Project Manager with the Housing and Community Development Division, introduced herself and stated she will be attending this meeting for Ms. Claudia Cázares.

C. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. MOTION: Commissioner Farrar made a motion to approve the HCDC meeting minutes of February 22, 2012.
SECONDED: Vice-Chair Rodriguez
AYES: Chair Cox, Vice-Chair Rodriguez, Commissioners Farrar, Fiske, and Roberts
NOES: None
ABSTAIN: None

D. GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

1. Item D-1, which was to be presented by Ms. Corrina Nunez, Housing and Community Development Division, was removed from the Agenda, and will be presented at a later date.
2. PUBLIC HEARING ON HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT ACCOMPLISHMENTS FOR FY 2010-2011 AND ANTICIPATED NEEDS FOR FY 2012-2013. *(Presented by Crystal Smith, Budget and Management Studies/CDBG Section)*

Ms. Crystal Smith, Management Analyst III, with the City of Fresno Finance Department, Budget and Management Studies/CDBG Section, stated Item D-2 is a request to conduct a public hearing on the City's Annual Action Plan Process. She gave the following synopsis: The City of Fresno is the recipient of federal entitlement funds from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, and receives funding from four sources: The Community Development Block Grant Fund (CDBG); The HOME Investment Partnerships Act Fund (HOME); The Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESG); and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS or HIV (HOPWA). The intent of the funding sources collectively is to provide community development; development of affordable housing; to provide assistance to specific target groups, which are low to moderate income citizens, to assist in sustained housing, and to improve the environment in which they reside.

Ms. Smith explained that the hearing is intended to receive comment from the public and the commissioners as to

their identification of the community's needs and use of the entitlement funds. The City expects to receive \$5.7 million in CDBG funds; \$2.1 million in HOME funds; \$596,000 in Emergency Shelter Grant funds; and \$358,000 in HOPWA funds. She stated that CDBG has gone down 16.2 percent for this fiscal year; HOME funds have gone down approximately 20 percent; Emergency Shelter Grant, for the homeless, has gone up 14 percent; HOPWA has remained the same.

Ms. Smith asked that the Chair open the Public Hearing to receive comments from the public, and after the hearing is closed she would request the commissioners to ask her any questions they might have.

PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Cox stated she would be opening the Public Hearing for the consideration of the 2012-2013 Annual Action Plan. She began by explaining the Public Hearing Instructions with the attendees, and Vice-Chair Rodriguez stated before the proceedings are open to the public, he would like to ask Ms. Smith what efforts were made to get the message out to the public. Ms. Smith stated there was a notice put in the Fresno Bee and Vida En El Valle. They sent out mailers to 120 agencies or persons who had an interest, who have been receiving funding for the past ten years. They also sent out a public announcement to various media. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked if any efforts were made as far as outreach to church organizations, other than what she had mentioned. Ms. Smith answered not outside of any churches that are on their mailing list and that have expressed an interest. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked if Ms. Smith is assuring the Commission that those notices meet all the legal requirements of HUD and the government in receiving the funds. Ms. Smith answered absolutely, and she stated that almost two years ago, the Department of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity came to Fresno and performed an audit, and the City has corrected any gaps they might have had. The gaps were primarily making sure they noticed people at least two weeks prior to the event, 15 days, and that they must publish notice of the hearing in another magazine for the second largest language group, which is Spanish.

Chair Cox continued explaining the proceedings, and stated that after the Public Hearing is closed to the public, unless HCDC asks a question, no further public input will be permitted. A recommendation will be made by the HCDC, which will be included in the staff report to be presented to Council. She then called the first speaker, Mr. Arthur Servin.

Mr. Servin, with Fresno Metro Ministry, asked the Commission to consider the investment on the Consolidated Plan Priorities, Number 5. For the past six to seven months he has been working on a program called Summer Night Lights at Holmes Park and Romain Park. He asked that HCDC consider these community centers, instead of focusing so much on some of the other priorities, because these parks have a front-line impact on people; it has a multiplier effect. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked if he was saying we should spend more money for personnel for the Police Department? Mr. Servin answered no, we need more projects to be going to local parks and neighborhood centers for redevelopment and capital improvement projects. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked if during his visits he went to the West Side and to Frank H. Ball Playground. Mr. Servin replied not yet, and that his program targets Holmes and Romain specifically at this time, and that area is not within their scope of work. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked if Mr. Servin knows whether or not the swimming pool at Frank H. Ball Park is functional. Mr. Servin answered he doesn't know. Vice-Chair Rodriguez stated he knows in the past they closed them down. Mr. Servin said, yes, and thankfully they did open last summer, but this summer will be a big question. He asked that the Commission consider every one of our neighborhood centers south of Shaw, the older parks, for capital improvement projects.

Ms. Brunette Harris, with H.E.A.T. for Southwest Fresno, stated they will object to any fundings from HUD for the City of Fresno. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked what she suggests as far as involving more Southwest people in the HUD process. Ms. Harris suggested they have community meetings on the budget issues at their centers or their schools. There has been no community meetings on this issue before it got to the Commission this evening. Vice-Chair Rodriguez asked if Ms. Harris's request was that the HCDC Commission hold its meeting in the neighborhood, or that staff attend and give them notice of a meeting. Ms. Harris said they're asking for both, they want it from the HCDC in the community, and from Crystal's office in the community, because it has to do with their community.

Chair Cox asked if Ms. Harris's organization has ever taken the opportunity to talk with Crystal's office and maybe collaborate and ask if they can assist in some way to help to have meetings in the community. Ms. Harris replied they met with Crystal, and Crystal's response was they could not put out that many flyers because that's not cost effective. Chair Cox stated Ms. Smith said they have done everything to fulfill their responsibilities required by the law. Ms. Harris said this is a mayor-appointed board, and by putting an article in the back of the paper in small print, it's not doing your part. There are elderly people on that side of town, that's not fair and that's not right. Vice-Chair Rodriguez replied to Ms. Harris's concern stating to print it on the front page would cost an enormous amount. Legal notices are generally put in the back in small print. That's because of cost, and a lot of reasons. They get their instructions from the federal government. That process has been in existence for 20 years or longer. If they don't meet that requirement, they'll cut the strings. He said that oftentimes, even though they get the word out, people don't care. They don't feel they're effective. They aren't going to take time out of their schedule to come and voice their opinion. He commended Ms. Harris for doing that, and she's been a regular, and she's done it the correct way, she's gotten her message on the record.

Ms. Smith stated Ms. Harris's request was to send a letter to every household, and that was cost prohibitive. They sent out

600 surveys; they contacted 200 agencies throughout the city; they held community meetings; they contacted the churches as part of the Consolidated Plan process; and there were meetings in the various council districts, and the turnout for those meetings for the public were probably under 50 people total. They had several meetings at City Hall; they went into all the communities; they dropped off flyers at churches, collected information on what they needed and how they wanted to be served. The low-income communities' priorities are always crime awareness. They want to ensure there is police and neighborhood response, like the POP Program, which weeds out criminal elements and re-seeds it with positive types of activities. The public says they want public facilities improvements. This information is coming from the public. Congress did not reduce the funding as a result of anything that City of Fresno had done. Overall CDBG was reduced across the nation. She continued that she has met with Mrs. Harris, she's received several letters from her, she's been in contact with HUD, and Mrs. Harris has asked Ms. Smith and her director not to contact her again, so she feels she must respect that. Correspondence has gone to DC, HUD, their regional office in San Francisco, and they have let her know that the City of Fresno is abiding by the law, and that the City is administering the programs in accordance with the statutes and the regulations. They have let her know this is a local matter.

Ms. Denise McPeters, with H.E.A.T. for Southwest Fresno, stated they still receive mail from the City. She lives by Fink-White and Frank H. The recreation leaders have been cut, and the kids don't have anywhere to play baseball, basketball or other sports. She stated the City has closed down their parks. They have no access to the schools because they keep the gates locked. She would like to know which churches Ms. Smith has contacted, because they have not contacted her church, the Westside Church of God on California.

Vice-Chair Rodriguez stated the Commission is here to pass judgment on what's been presented by the staff addressing ten issues for the forthcoming years with the funds that come from the federal government. Both speakers have addressed the issue of notice and decisions made by the Commission. Neither one of them has addressed any of the ten points we are supposed to be considering. He told her if she has a comment on those, put it on the record. Ms. McPeters stated she would like to use CDBG money for the homeless. She added, the money for crime suppression needs to be used for the kids, for parks, for safe havens to go to. It's better for the children to be on the playground than in the court. She said the senior citizens need adequate housing.

Ms. Christina Hathaway, Staff Attorney with the Central California Legal Services, stated all ten of the priorities in Exhibit C are important, especially Number 7, Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing, Prevention of Homelessness, and Permanent Housing for Homeless. She and her co-worker Naureen Nalia see tenants being evicted every day. Their goal is to try and prevent them from becoming homeless. She stated, Number 1, New Construction of Affordable Housing, is very important, so that we can keep up with trying to diminish the amount of homeless people we have. She said Number 2, Housing Rehabilitation and Acquisition Program, is also very important. The City tends to build a lot, but we should utilize what is already available. She stated, with regards to the notice the two ladies spoke about, sometimes it's worthwhile to go that extra step to make that connection. Notice is being put out in the paper, and some people just don't care, as Vice-Chair stated. What needs to happen is somebody needs to take a stance, whether it's H.E.A.T. or somebody from that community, and show the people how these proposals will affect them. When people understand the ramifications of money, then they have an investment in it.

Vice-Chair Rodriguez thanked Ms. Hathaway, and said her expressions are valid and on point to the issues that they're addressing this evening.

Commissioner Farrar said in some of the previous speakers there seems to be some cross-over that they really want community involvement, and that's the City council member's job. That's what he or she is elected to do. He said talk to your City council member. Chair Cox stated she doesn't believe the City council member is not doing their job. She knows from experience you can put out 50,000 flyers, and you might get a return of 15 or 17. Somebody has to go above and beyond. The gatekeeper of the community has to take the lead and go out and educate those people. Ms. Hathaway agreed.

Ms. Naureen Nalia, with the Central California Legal Services, stated she also works with the City on these projects, and she said, regarding Number 7, Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing, Prevention of Homelessness, and Permanent Housing for Homeless, one of the things she sees skipped over is the "emergency shelter" part. There has been progress made in transitional housing, prevention of homelessness, and permanent housing for homeless, and some of those programs her clients have very good things to say about. She and Christina are in the streets a lot, and as far as emergency shelters go, there is a huge disconnect between the number of beds and the number of homeless in the streets. In past years we've had cooling and warming shelters, where nights get below freezing, or in the summer it gets too hot, and there were places for people to go and sleep. This winter there were no warming shelters, and she understands it was due to budget issues. There are stories about emergency rooms being shut down due to the number of people coming in who had pneumonia and other cold-related illnesses.

Chair Cox closed the public portion of the hearing. Vice-Chair Rodriguez said, when they have the public hearings, they're talking about a lot of money, and the public response is similar to what they've seen in the past. But they go through the process, in order to keep the funds flowing, for whatever purposes they want to put them to use. He stated the staff has done

a good job within the regulations, and he commended them for the hard work they do. Chair Cox asked Ms. Smith, regarding the five-year plan, with the downfall of the economy, if they go back in and restructure the plan. Ms. Smith answered the priorities stay the same. Within that five-year strategic plan, there are funds that are discussed, but there is no appropriation, it's not an appropriating document. For each annual action plan, the process at the end of it will be a culmination of a report that will go before the Commission again, and then will go to Council. She will begin the five-year strategic plan next year, which is a year-and-a-half process. With the economic down-turn, they may see a shift in priorities.

Commissioner Fiske stated she has been very impressed by the variety of the different programs that have come before the Commission. She asked how they decide what's going to be the next project, because there are problems in Southwest Fresno, Southeast Fresno, and the Lowell Neighborhood. Ms. Smith said she's probably referring to the HOME funds, because that's really the various projects that come to the Commission throughout the year. She asked if Commissioner Fiske is talking about affordable housing development. Commissioner Fiske said she thinks nearly all of them have been about affordable housing. Ms. Smith said, CDBG, once it's adopted, it's set, but projects roll in through the HOME Program and they're presented through developers throughout the year. Ms. Smith explained some of the affordable project information, and she said she can furnish an approximate 20-page document Ms. Cázares has for their review. Ms. Fiske asked if the projects arise because of developers presenting them to the City. Ms. Smith answered yes, but there are non-profit and for-profit developers. Most of them are non-profit developers, or they're a for-profit developer with a non-profit arm. If you use a certain funding source, they have to be a community base, what's called CHDO. Their articles of incorporation specifically have to say "We're serving Fresno."

E. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS

None

F. COMMISSIONERS' ITEMS

Vice-Chair Rodriguez gave a report on a recently-published book, which he highly recommends. He explained the authors have done a portrait of California as it relates to the kinds of things discussed at this Commission. They've divided California into five areas and isolated the two richest areas in the state, San Francisco Bay Area, Silicon Valley, and parts of San Diego. At the bottom, Number 5, is Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley, which leads in statistics for lack of education, crime, poverty and income. The whole San Joaquin Valley is affected. It's titled *A Portrait of California*, Issued in 2011. The authors are Sarah Burd-Sharps, and Kristen Lewis.

G. UNSCHEDULED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

None

H. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to bring before the Housing and Community Development Commission, the meeting adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

Next Regularly Scheduled Commission Meeting: **March 28, 2012**

Attest:

Rogenia Cox, Chairperson

ARMANDO O. RODRIGUEZ

Attest:

Erica Castaneda, Project Manager

Housing and Community Development